

Appleby Archaeology Group November Meeting

Appleby Archaeology Group welcomed Jamie Lund, archaeologist for the National Trust, North West Region, to their November meeting where he spoke about his recent historic landscape survey at Hartsop in the Ullswater valley.

Jamie began by outlining his work with the "Trust" explaining that the surveys help us to understand how land was used in the past and contribute to helping in planning the future management of land and buildings. The methodology involves walking over an area and recording anything significant, such as monuments, buildings and particularly boundary walls; a documentary search is undertaken and local people are interviewed to build as full a picture of the land use as possible. A number of areas have been surveyed including Great Langdale and Wasdale Head.

He described, in detail, the findings from the historic landscape survey at Hartsop. The area surveyed was 3640 acres with Brothers Water at the centre and the of summit Kirkstone Pass and Beckstones Farm marking the southern and northern limits.

The earliest monuments found were examples of Neolithic rock art. These were found beside a bridleway which runs in a north to south direction. Could this have been an ancient route from the monuments near Penrith to the axe factory at Great Langdale? A Bronze age mound, which has been explored at some time in the past, can be seen near Hartsop Hall Farm. The only traces of the Romans are two roads, High Street, and one through the Kirkstone Pass which was used until the present road was built in the 18th century and was excavated in 1980. A Romano British enclosure with large stones, known locally as Druid Stones can be seen below High Hartsop Dod.

There is little evidence in the landscape of the centuries preceding the Norman invasion but place names in the Lake District indicate the presence of Norsemen. Place names ending with "thwaite" meaning a clearing suggest that the Norsemen may have cleared the woodland for agriculture.

The 11th-13th century was a time of social change with a rising population. Large areas of land were given to the Norman nobility but alas the name of the first Lord of the Manor of Hartsop is unknown. The first documentary evidence relating to the Manor is early 13th century and records a marriage. The Manor was divided along the line of Kirkstone Beck. On the west was the demesne land (retained by the owner)

with large fields and woodland and on the east the tenants had their tiny fields. The valley bottom of meadow and arable land was probably enclosed in the early 1200s with the stock grazing on the higher ground and brought down for winter. The division of the land by Brothers Water may have led to two hamlets High and Low Hartsop. Documents record that the demesne land became a vacarry (cattle ranch) and mention the presence of an early Hall.

The expansion halted in the 14th century due to a deteriorating climate, the Scots and the Black Death. The population did not recover until the 15-16th centuries when records tell us a new hall was built and of a marriage link to the Lowthers. The demesne land was now given over to agricultural use and put in the hands of tenants. As the population rose more land was taken in from the fells where there is evidence of stone clearing. The south facing land was cleared first. After 1660 sheep predominated and there are records of pinfolds and stints as well as the physical remains of a number of hog houses. Some farms expanded and this period saw the first buildings in the style we now consider typical of the Lake District.

From the 17th century the land was exploited by industry. In 1697 a licence was granted to mine the lead bearing rock above Hartsop Hall and mining continued there until 1947, leaving evidence of buildings such as the smelt mill, the mining levels and of the diversion of water to provide power. Sled gates, where the men transported slate down hill on trolleys, are clearly seen to the east of Kirkstone Pass and are evidence of slate quarrying on Caudate Moor, which continued until the 1930s. In the early 19th century charcoal was produced from the woods on the demesne land and over 40 production sites were found within the survey area.

The rectangular fields and straight walls of today's landscape are the result of enclosure awards made in the latter part of the 19th century and are perhaps the most apparent indications of land use today.

Jamie convinced the group of the value of historic landscape surveys. The one conducted at Hartsop has given us a picture of how the land has been used for 4000 years. He concluded by telling us that Hartsop Hall Farm, sold in 1947, was the first farm to be sold to pay death duties and was known as Dalton Farm after the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the time.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday December 9th, in the Supper Room, Market Hall, Appleby at 7.30pm when Georgina Plowright will talk on Roman Domestic Life in the Frontier Area.

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